



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
June 24, 2004

For More Information, Contact:
Karin Mongeon
HIV/AIDS Program Manager
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2377
E-mail: kmongeon@state.nd.us

North Dakota Observes National HIV Testing Day ***State Health Department Urges Testing for At-Risk People***

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of *National HIV Testing Day* on June 27th, the North Dakota Department of Health is urging people who have ever put themselves at risk for HIV to get tested, according to Karin Mongeon, HIV/AIDS Program Manager for the Department of Health.

National HIV Testing Day is an annual campaign coordinated by the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) to encourage people who don't know their HIV status to get tested. The message of this year's campaign is *It's Better to Know*. According to estimates, as many as 280,000 Americans are living with HIV and don't know it.

"HIV is a real concern for anyone who has ever engaged in risky behavior, such as unprotected sex or needle sharing," Mongeon said. "Because North Dakota has a lower incidence of HIV/AIDS than other states, many North Dakotans don't perceive themselves to be at risk even when they engage in behaviors that put them at risk."

This misperception of risk and fear of test results often keep people from being tested. "It is very important that HIV-positive people know their status so they can receive the proper care and treatment and take steps necessary to prevent transmission to others," Mongeon said.

Since HIV/AIDS surveillance began in North Dakota in 1984, more than 300 people have been reported to have HIV/AIDS. In 2003, 22 HIV/AIDS cases were reported in the state; the same number of cases was reported in 2002. Estimates indicate that there are about 116 people living with HIV in North Dakota, of whom about 73 percent are between the ages of 30 and 59.

-- more --

600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@state.nd.us

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

Free and confidential HIV counseling, testing and referral, as well as other prevention services, are available in North Dakota. Benefits and services also are available for low-income North Dakota residents living with HIV/AIDS to help with the medical costs of treating the disease.

To locate an HIV test site or to learn more about HIV/AIDS and the services available in the state, call the North Dakota Department of Health HIV/AIDS Program hotline at 800.70.NDHIV or visit the program's website at www.ndhiv.com.

-- 30 --

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.